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# The Musician

RAY BENNETT WEAVER

# THE MUSICIAN

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1914

I ask but this, to be a prince of song,
And have my kingdom in the hearts of men:
No service but their love; and no reward
But in the good that I can do; no fame
But in the living joy of human hearts;
No crown but the soft light of banished tears.

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WAUKESHA, WIS.

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TO

FATHER AND MOTHER

# THE MUSICIAN

## PART ONE

The wind in unseen pulses trembling came,
As though 'twere breathed from some great breast of love;
And tenderly it moved as though it knew
The heart-deep sighs that stirred it on its way,
With wistful whispering to touch the world
To one full voiced sorrow and one moan.
From mystic plains it came, whose mighty curve
For aye had bended up to kissing skies,
A vasty waste where vestal angels choir,
And with their music sweet, melt tearful stars
All into golden harps, and string them well
With sounding silver from the moon's sad heart.
And so it came and tarried in the streets
Of the far spreading city, lost itself
Amid the heaven flaring spires and walls
That buffet with the storms too near the sun,
And found itself while weeping over crowds
That snaked their way beneath the brazen lights.
Then out beyond the walls in sick retreat,
Full heavy, as with human hearted pain
It panted, rested on the sands from whence
It crept toward the gorges that were made
When mad eruption spat the mountains up
In diabolic frenzy, at the skies.
There, sipping of the snow-chilled mountain tears,
It throbbed with refreshed life and gently rose
From out the rich, dark opal distances,
Up to the radiant and refulgent light

That rolled in bending glory o'er the hills.
It's tuneful whisperings among the rocks
Grew pregnant with a sorrow, weird and wild,
And sharp, like breath forced fiercely through shut teeth,
When pain contracts and spasms twist the frame.
Yet as it louder cried and shrieked its way
Unto a valley, whose precipitous sides
Brested against the close flung shadows thrown
From each to each, it changed its piercing wail
To a sad moaning, soft, melodious,
Such as might fitly sound a requiem
Over a heart struck to its death by grief.
As thus it neared the valley's shadowed head,
Oft pausing on the broad pine branch's couch
To rest its sorrow and its weariness,
There came to it a plaint of such rare pain
As caused its soul to quiver and to throb,
And then to sicken into silences.

Far up the star-sweet valley's misting side
Two forms in the deep glory of the dark,
In softened shadows, tender, clinging shades
Moved close together, while the queenly night
With fiery minions bearing up her train
Swept on, majestic, sovereign, glorious.
'Mid stunted pines that grappled with the rocks
As man to life, they stood, while all the earth
Breathed out its tender, weeping mystery.
Then lyric grief touched pain with holier fire:
He lifted lovingly his violin
And would have sung some lightsome lover's song;
But, as he paused to find his fingering,
The gleaming bow arched o'er the eager strings,
His breast o'erheaved itself into a sigh
That brought the cough upon him once again.
Then flashed his flaming bow like leaping light
And smote the sounding strings, and kissed them o'er
With kindly croonings, wistful mother sobs.
Yet, heated agony within him reared

Her monster head and shook her darting locks
Against his quivering heart, and spat with flame
Upon his soul, so that his anguish rent
Itself with tortures 'neath the steely stars,
And bound itself again with harmony.
But still the knot of passion in his breast,
To cramping tightness drawn by heavy woe,
By all the lava tongues from music's heart
Could not be loosed, and madly played he on
Until his soul was weak from leaping so
To pierce itself against the golden tips
Of heaven's pointed stars, and softly came
Back to him like a moon-flung shadow fallen
Into the dark of some great, hollow cave.
Then rested he his aching bow and eased
The taut and quivering hairs that brightly gleamed
Against the dark and graceful, bending wood.
His sad-souled violin that lingered still,
And nestled tenderly above his heart,
He placed within the soft case lipped with plush,
Deep murmuring, "But once more, and I die!"

Sweet Esther, rested near with mellow eyes,
Whose quiet glory, dark and rich and true,
Glowed deeply through the passion of the tears
Unable to flow o'er the burning lid
That set a ring of fire about them all.
She spoke, and as each choked word found its way
Unto her lips, it robed itself with sighs,
And bore its meaning forth and laid it low,
Like some hot petal of a blasted rose,
Within his utmost heart. "Speak not of death
To one within whose breast its fearful darts
Have long since cut their way, have rankled there
With livid, biting poison. I, not marked
(Yea, and a soul has eyes more fine than sense)
The hot flush flood the hollow of thy cheek?
The awful look within thy wistful eye,
Which fixed on me cries but, 'Farewell, farewell,

Farewell for ageless, long eternity?' "

"Ah yes, farewell! Soft stars in mellow mist
And moons from lofty glory melt away.
Brave suns, o'er brown and prayerful Western hills
Pour out the pity of their death-doomed breasts,
And kindly sleep folds earth's great eyelids down:
Within the dark the whisper of a wing,
A star sure fixed, a chorus chanting low—
'Peace, peace—sweet rest! All shall be glorified!'
I who had thought to live, and live with thee,
Since I must die, will die without thee, love.
Far, far away I'll go and chill thee not
As I fade slowly to a soul again.
There I shall play my own short requiem,
Kiss some dear token of thy love, and die."

Great silence fell upon them, sorrow's soft
And hushing mantle fell upon their souls.
Yet in the night the heart's sweet fever burned,
And caustic grief gulped laughter's honeyed tears.
The canyons gave their blue ghosts to the moon,
With moan outbreathed and frank and fraught with woe.
The rugged mountains raised their scraggy arms,
With spasms shocked, distorted and o'ertense,
Held them distended, racked with fevers sharp,
While over them sank down the numbing snow.
He slightly swayed as does the tender tree
Beneath the powerful eagle's quest-bent wings,
Then turned his eyes upon her, sadder far
Than the high mountain lake that sobs its dirge
Against a dead volcano's lava lip.

"Oh, Esther, when these stars are clear and cold,
Some other night than this, some future night—
I can scarce speak, my soul is straining so
For something beyond utterance. Simple, then,
Let my words be, and few—for, God! They scorch
My lips in passing, and like coals lie close

Upon my tongue and eat my very flesh.
My breast a furnace is, whose heat confined
Doth rage against my soul. Ten thousand coals,
White blasted, weigh their clinkered weight upon
My heart, whose pain distorted arteries
Do pulse the lava of my seething blood
Into my frenzied brain. Oh, God! Oh, God!
What damned fury is this shrieking so
'Gainst my poor strength as if I were a man
Toughened to hell's most bitter, hot embrace—
Sweet Esther,—so I spoke, when these same stars,
That flaunt so gayly in the heavens tonight,
So careless of black horror's misery,
Do shine, do sparkle, then, when I—when I—"

"You whom with my whole heart I dearly love,
To whose embrace I yield myself entire,
Now keep this trust, this night bird, lover mine!
Oh, leave me not! See, how I do implore!
I lay my weakness even at your feet,
That it may win one glance from your strong soul
As you pass by. And wilt thou lift it not
And warm it 'gainst thy tender, pitying breast,
And wrap its nakedness in the rich folds
Of purple that sleep close above thy heart?
Oh! No more words have I, my all is spent!
A woman's last plea have I made to you,
I've said my soul's deep all in, 'I am thine!' "

"Mine! Mine! For God's eternity, all mine!
Oh, chide me not, great zoneless lights of heaven,
That I embrace this treasure once again,
Though I do stand among the very clods
Of that deep grave wherein I shall lie down,
And watch forever the majestic East
Shooting her suns up at the embattled stars,
Lifting her moons and planets up to light
The uncertain ways which lovers so oft go.
Mine! Mine! Beloved, are you truly mine?

Have you no jealousy of pale-eyed death
Whose blue lips come between our kisses so?
Each glorious hair is mine! Oh, were my heart
Wrapped close in its soft strength, it could not break!
Each tear, which tells of every joy or pain
We e'er have felt together—all are mine!
Ah! I shall chain them on a rosary
For my cold chapel wall, and tell them o'er
Whenever your light foot doth kiss the earth
These thousand miles away. My heart, my soul
Embalmed by your pure love, shall never cease
To drink the nectar of your womanhood.
A minute of thy life sings more of God
Than all a Calla-lily's trumpet days!"

How wept the night at this illusion sweet,
This holy madness which could only whet
The keenness of that fateful scimitar,
Which leaps from off Necessity's sharp wing,
A scale-like, armored feather, cutting deep
Like new moons hurtling from their scabbards dark.
Yet shall not every heart-joy which we feel
Temper the coldness of the chilly grave
To something kinder? Shall not every rose
We reach for, though we lose it, make more soft
That strange and wondrous couch where we shall lie?
Sweet-pillowed there on petals rich with love,
How fair our dreams shall be, how pleasant, kind
And lightsome! Lulled by mystic music low,
The lyric harmonies, delightsome, rare,
The dulcet minors of dew-dreaming flowers,
How softly, slowly, gently shall we wake
To God's eternity of mighty bliss!
Sleep! Sleep, thou glorious, legion hearts of love!
Sleep! Sleep and dream, and let thy dreams be bright,
That so thy eyes may bear the brilliance great
When all thy dreams are done and ye awake
At the fire-whitened throne—the God of kings!—
Awake with trembling to search out thine own

Amid the countless ye will surely love
Even as thine own, and when ye all shall know
A joy most infinite, because ye've learned
To love beyond all measure and all bound.

But as the evening star with kind, brave eye
Kisses the frowning from the dark-browed night
And sweetens all the rugged hills to song,
Compassionate, harmonic, tender voiced,
So, surging up within his soul there came
A charming courage, clear and strong and brave.
O'er mastered by its quiet, kind command,
He spoke; and though each word hurt deeply his
Sore heart, the spirit of the word healed close
The sharp, fierce wound it made, and while her head
Bent slowly lower as though it would rest
Upon the pillowy breast of some small wind,
To find the sustenance and gracious peace
It was her lover's wont to give, he said:

"My Esther, yet no longer mine! I pray
You give a patient hearing to my words;
For they shall try you as they do try me,
Beyond endurance to a simple faith.
Ah! How with love's rich fancies we gauze o'er
And madly beautify the facts of life!
Our thick, corporeal blood, with siren songs
We'd charm to carry more than food for flesh.
An eye is but an eye, and after death
This all we are is but the thing we were.
We are the unit products of a great
And mighty generation, a God-force,
And we, like crystal valley lakes of wide
Expanse, do gather all the mystic streams
That flow from our ancestry, even that
High tributary which doth course from God,
To bring us even in our infancy
A consciousness of heaven and of Him.
But though within the mazy murmurings

Of birth, we share a fellow consciousness,
Remembrance can not breast the tidal wave
That brought us to this mart of mystery,
As feeling protoplasms into which
The tall flowers of our souls had fixed soft root.
Where stars beyond the stars in wonder white
Burn out the mighty splendor of their lives,
There is no heaven for birth-yearning souls,
Nor any infinite from which we come,—
Lean fancy's fiction fixed and packed in clods!
Why! Knows not man the fool of useless faith
Who, looking with his eye to grasp and know
The infinite, o'er strains his sense and sees,
In yellow fever mists of earth's low fen,
The golden glory of a host filled heaven?
Hath not the great Creator power to make
For each, at birth, his soul, as well as form
Ten million souls and keep them in supply?
Thy soul and mine beyond birth's heavy gate,
Ne'er bathed in dew or kissed o'er roses sweet.
Even in the work-day wonders of this life
We lived for years and knew each other not.
We met—Oh, wonderful! We met and loved!
But still, though all divinity seems sprung
From that one meeting, who can well deny
That meeting was determined by chance
And not divinity? I speak as one
Already before judgment: these are not
Mere shameless fakers with the food of faith.
Let us be frank, dear Esther, and admit
That though we love each other, yet we each
Some other may have loved from that we do."

"What purpose have your words that they do come
So round about at that which you would say?
My heart doth fear some ending full of dread
When you do speak such slow philosophies,
And weight your passion's graceful, airy wings
With all this cold and shivering valley-dew,

Like age-old tears reborn of deep-sunk mists.
Dear heart, what care I for the laws of birth,
The source of love, the all outsprung from God,
The mystic chances, possibilities
By which, though we might not have met, we did?
What purport has it, what importance pray,
Since we do love, and I would come to thee?

"That arrow pains the least which surest flies
Unto the heart; so let my speech strike home:
You might have loved some other than myself,
Some other may you love when I am gone.
You do forget that e'er mad Phaeton
Doth rise once more from out the purple Po,
To breast the lighteuing of Jupiter,—
Yes, e'er strong Phoebus' steeds do neigh but once
Within their bright, restraining, golden stalls,
We two, who met and loved, shall separate
Until the abyssmal sparks do upward whirl,
Aroused by the arch-angel's trumpet blast.
This parting charge I leave you, with my soul:
To any love that equals thine in worth,
Resistance do not give, in thought of me.
My life goes to the grave, and I may cast
No reflect of it down the broadening way
The generations open—it is done!
So much the more I yearn that those, in whom
My love hath an abiding, live their lives
In influence both kind and natural.
So, when he comes, as I do pray he will,
To claim as great a love as you gave me,—
Though not the same!—Yes, when he plants the seed
From which shall spring a rose bush in thy heart,
Root it not out, but culture it with care,
And wear its every blossom on thy breast
For him, for him, for him, and only him!"

Strong was the protest in her attitude,
Yet deeply suppliant she raised her eyes

All dewy-wild with the great darting pain
That leaped within her breast like some malign
And fiery shuttle, that would weave a mesh
Of choking death about her tortured heart.
With trembling tenderness she placed her hand
Upon his arm, and waited for his look.

"Musician art thou and expression give
To all my humble soul, in love, has known.
Has ever discord in thy music come?
My soul has never ceased to sing its prayer
Within the lovely temple of thy heart,
And ever to the sweetly resonant walls
Has tuned its holy, sympathetic praise.
Upon the golden alter there enshrined
A vestal virgin have I kept the fire;
And shall I leave my white-robed service now,
To wait in purple at some other shrine?"

"Thy altar's cracked and shattered with a flame!
Thy fires have burnt too deeply, and the walls
Too tenderly enraptured with thy song
Fall now in brilliant crystal o'er thy soul.
From out the splendor of the ruined heap
Still mounts the incense of thy holy trust,
And over all there weeps the unpaid care
Which kept it through the glorious, gladsome years.
Oh, Esther, love, my heart doth strive to break,
To fall in tatters like fire-shredded worlds
That rear their way in horror through the sky!
But yet, as yonder mountain's horn doth pierce
The moon's pain-paled heart and hold it high
Before it flings it to the lower dark,
So am I held to suffer and to strain
And writhe in horrors, that I cannot die
At once—'Tis gone! 'Tis gone! Dream-drifting on
In silvery shadows and sepulchral sleep,
So let me go. But I, I cannot go!
Now surge within my soul such things as roar

Above all speech. A fiery tempest swirls
Its dart-sparks through my mind, and now when I
Would speak such words as gather fully in
All the rich wonders of the blessed days,
Would leave them with you for your hunger years,
I can say nothing, yet I wish for thee
A lover's blessing, such as almost breasts
The power of the Almighty God to give!"

A sob smote all his aching words away,
But anguish moaned their message in her ear.
Low crouched he as a striken angel might
And tossed himself upon the cruel embrace
Of steely stones, and clasped his eyes and clutched
His throat convulsed in terror of his pain.
Then sprang he up and, with a screaching laugh,
He shook his twitching fingers o'er his head,
And once more fell, face foreward, toward the East.

# THE MUSICIAN

## PART TWO

An Eastern land of rich, deep-breasted lakes
Gave quiet home to a lone traveler.
Soft, blossoming Spring, with all her laughing fays,
Was still at work in sky and field and wood,
Melting her fresh, warm rains among the clouds,
Pulsing her throbbing life through quivering earth,
Waking the timid flowers, unfurling leaves,
And calling up the song birds from the lush
Savannas of the sweet, symphonic South.
All life was rich and glad with lightsome joy:
The days ran o'er with laughter's rippling mirth,
And mazy murmurings of happiness
Filled all the nights with mellow harmony.
The morning brought the day with gladsome song,
Her fresh breath tuned to mystic melodies,
Dew-sweet, ecstatic, rapturous, and rare.
The evening clapped her golden cymbaled hands
As Phoebus charged to Lethe's plunging stream.
She smote the heavens full of merry sound,
While round the gleeful lake, whose maiden eye
Laughed at the rollicking stars romancing through
The glorious mazes of the heaven's wide court,
A gurgling sweet of infant, sportive waves
Mounted the air with tender foot of song,
And wrought the limpid glory of their gold
Into a music high among the leaves.
Wise shadows, manes of the bashful trees,
Crept to the water's edge and softly slipped

Into their evening bath; but over all
A falling stream rang out its dulcet bells,
And smoothed their trebbles into minor strains,
That in the aisled and heavy arched wood
Like sound of human tears died into dreams.

Pale was the face the gently misting moon,
With all its aureole of clustering stars,
Found fixed toward the West, where Pheobus flew
Through flocks of frightened clouds which hovered on
Their wounded way adown the empyreal East.
Pale was the face as it were blasted so
By utmost pain's fierce, caustic encauma;
But bright the eyes that burned beneath that brow,
Where sorrow placed the brand of her last woe.
All the great mists that writhed among the trees
And snaked their way in serpent chase of dreams,
Through places lone and chill, could not ensnare
The piercing splendor of that soul-lit glance.

Three weeks had worn their weary lengths away
Since the Musician, stricken, sad, and lone,
Had sought the refuge of this quiet spot.
Secretive, sorrowful and meek and still,
He shared his agony but with his God.
Pain lay too deeply in his suffering breast
To be drawn out and foundled o'er with tongues;
Too sacred was the woe that in distress
Flung its wild arms about his tearful soul,
To be but kept and patiently endured.
So, thoughtfully and with few words he gained
A cottage, fast secluded and alone,
And simple service of a country girl.
'Twas thus he hid himself away, to die;
To live the long days with sad memories;
To dream them o'er throughout the fevered nights,
To weep o'er violets that freshly sprung
Among the dull leaves of the past dead year.
As now he sat, the quiet country girl,

Who, with a quaint and unskilled tenderness
Kept watch upon his needs, admonished him:
"The sunset marks the time for you to sleep,
And see, the high moon finds you far from rest.
Chill currents of cold air search through the trees
And heavy fogs creep there not far away
Above the singing waters of the stream.
The early insects drone their slumber song,
The frogs blow out their shrill breath at the stars,
And night-romancing fishes cut and slash
The soft, smooth surface of the sleeping lake;
And yet you hold your wide eyes toward the West.
You seem to have no care for your weak health,
And since your coming, sudden and so strange,
With your cased violin, I've wondered oft
If truely you did come to gain in strength,
Or to jump faster toward your eager grave."

With simple, kind regard, he rested back
Against the breaking bark of an old tree,
And painfully protested with a sigh,
That she would be more tender to his ways
Did she but know their prompting's awful power.
His wistful manner and his mystic speech,
Suggestive of a woe beyond all words,
Held potent charm over her simple heart,
And she stood worshipful and fixed before
This holy thing she could not understand:
For oft the human heart doth pause to pray
To its own ignorance too well expressed
In mystery. Then, as he saw her thus,
Her naive way re-acted on his wont,
And, as a silence shepherds each slight noise,
And pure air drinks impassioned, rare perfume,
So did her wonder and her quaint desire,
Expressed in mystic modesty and faith,
Lure from him softly that his turgid heart
Too long had kept within its strained confine:

"Marked you how wounded seemed the clouds that came
From out the West? And how they wept their blood,
Their scalding blood, on yon horizon's breast
E'er they did leave it for the Eastern night
Where their dun mourning blackens? Say, dids't thou
But question ardent Phoebus why he dashed
So hotly, and with colors clamoring
So wildly, down toward those bridal hills,
Those Western hills, so like a bridegroom, he?
Ah! Cans't thou tell me not why each sweet flower
Doth bend its head toward the West in prayer;
And dost thou not discern the reason, girl,
Why each love-lilting bird turns its full throat
Toward the West, its evening psalm to sing?
What peace comes now, as though a mother's breast
Were pillowing to sleep all careful life!
It is the wind, it is the Western wind,
The moving spirit of the mountain land,
Guarded by angels o'er the Eden plains
Where cacti stand like crosses in the sun!
It is the Western wind, the Western wind,
Which softly greets thy white and maiden brow
With sister kisses! Look! It brings more clouds
Breathed yesternight from some brave mountain's top,
Where angels make their chaste baths in the snow.
See! What a bouquet wreath they round the moon,
Like memory of love's rich fantasies!
Ah! All the night moves into music now
And spheres their solemn orchestration hold:
Great Venus waves her baton through the skies
In curve majestic, flashing rose-red light;
And Saturn's bow, strung with a comet's mane—
So tawny doth it gleam—flares down to boom
Upon his cello's breast; while Mars, upon
The drum beats hotly war's great thunder strain.
Bold, clarion stars with cornet, flute, and pipe
Blow out sweet music that drips down in gold
To gild Diana's harp of harmonies.
But 'tis the West wind plays the violin,

With sound as of a woman's wept farewell;
And so doth earth add to the symphony
That swings each universe upon its way.
Alas! My gentle minister of gentler cures,
My raging fever flings my utterance wild.
Pray, mark it not nor seek with love to stay
The burning out of this bent-candle life,
Too deeply socketed! Thy tolerance lend
To what I speak, for soon in all the night
My voice shall sound its weary plaint no more."

A woman's tear burned on his out-flung hand,
A woman's tender pressure held it fast,
A woman's eyes, soul-filled with pity deep,
Looked up at him through all their wondering woe.
She spoke in mellow, soft, and passionate voice,
Like bells among the cedar boughs at eve.
"Kind friend—for now indeed I call you friend
Without restraint or sense of being bold,—
My poor heart hurts, so simple and unwise
It is, that—Ah! It feels beyond the crude
And humble sympathy that I express.
You'll never understand a woman's heart,
Which like the changing bosom of a lake
Is quick to mirror every passing shade;
To laugh and dance with every wandering wind;
And yet, within its still and quiet depth,
To cradle power in rare security.
Oh, all these tears of mine and all these sighs
Are but the outer symbols of a grief
Set deep within the core of my sad breast!
I can not in the brilliance of a tear
And in the sounding of a fretted sigh,
Show the bright love that shines within my heart
And utter forth the woe that binds it there.
You are a man; a strange, weak woman, I,
Restrained from you, another soul set off
In isolation absolute and chill.
Because I am a woman I would cure

The sickness that seems busy over you;
But that I am a woman, so must I
No unction give, but suffer with you still.
Yet, so I think, each heart has its own grief,
And grief cures grief, so over yours I'll pour
The thin, hot stream of mine to soothe your own.
Indeed, I know not why you came, nor whence,
Nor what has brought you like a lone, strayed bird,
All wounded, to the quiet of this land.
You ne'er have told me and I ask you not;
Yet since you came these few strange days ago
In you I've found a trust that is complete."

" 'Tis well to trust in those who moan with death,
And my sage intuition whispers me
To trust another is not well nor wise.
But thou mayst speak to me as safely, girl,
As thou wouldst fling thee on a grave and pour
Thy secret-bearing tears down through the clods."

And as she spoke, crouched lowly by his knee,
Her face turned out toward the laughing light
That marked the lake, where music-crested waves
Melted in melody against the shore
And chimed the sweet bells in their silvery foam,
She told a tale of simple, rustic love
That almost hid its pathos in the folds
Of its own commoness. Yet, in her heart
Great pain was robed in scarlet and sat throned.

"Two years he lived to grace his mother's eye
Before I came, like sorrow, unto mine.
Born in a spot so quiet and alone,
Early we sought a childhood friendliness,
And much together we roamed through the wood
In chase of butterflies that led us to
The hidden riches of the secret flowers.
By quick pursuit of thrifty honey bees
In rifted trees we found their treasured store.

O'er lake, through wood, and sunny field we flew,
Even from the time when morning dews were chill
Within the cups of fairies, to the time
When the shrill tree-toad blinked his eye and sang
To see the shadows creep among the leaves
And blind the winged midges droning there.
Two rose buds on the self-same branch we grew;
But only I awakened in the sun
And tried to hide my heart within my breast.
Through the long years I waited and with prayers
Bathed o'er my heart to keep it chaste and true,
That if perchance his love should search me out
I should be worthy of his hope and care.
But, Ah! I have so often idly thought,
As I strayed lonely through the virgin wood,
And marked the myriad flowers that blossomed there
Unseen, unknown, and ever unenjoyed,
How like to maiden hearts in love they are.
Yes, and I envy them as I go by,
So sweetly do they mix their sad perfume
In fellow sympathy and mutual woe.
I would I were a flower to grow upon
The path he treads, that so he might crush out
My life beneath his foot, or pluck me up
And wear me ever close upon his heart!
How brown the tokens are he brought to me
In those days of the sunshine of our youth!
So splendid they were then, the rarest blooms
That all his prowess great could gather in!
He is so good, so kind, so strong and brave,
And true he would be if he ever loved;
Yet, health has set such fire within his soul,
Such mounting vigor singing through his frame,
Such lightnings in his eye to warm his cheek,
That he by love no more can be restrained
Than winds that hurl the heavy tempest up.
No man the country through can equal him
In wealth of all that makes up manliness."

Fixed through the soul with this plain, simple tale,
The sad Musician bowed his aching head
Upon his upturned palms to ease the rage
That jostled like spear-flames together flung
Within his brain. But yet his heart gaped wide,
Gasping for but a breath of this same force
Which burned itself in ruddy way along
The powerful arteries of perfect health.
While he bowed low, across the gleaming lake
There came a merry and a royal lay,
A song above the singing of the waves,
Majestic music, rich with boundless joy.
A low canoe, like some swift meteor's wing
Down dropped from heaven, kissed the crested tops
Of waves embossed with splendor and with sheen,
And leaped, e'er yet its kisses gurgled out,
In rounds and whirls of silver, all their glee,
To taste again the amorous water's lip.
Alone the boatman knelt, his tawny head
In brave rejoicing tossed at backward slant,
And all his muscles plying at the task,
Thrilled with the mighty joy that leaps in life.
Like laughing light he came and flashed away
To the deep music of his caroling;
While all along the shore the happy waves,
In jest, cried out that joy had smitten them.

# THE MUSICIAN

## PART THREE

With bursting, red-veined glory Autumn came
And cast her wild, free beauty o'er the hills.
She caught the sunrise lights among the clouds,
The heavy lights that steep the night in flame,
Mad Bacchanal! She smote with Thyrsus red
Each bended bough, and leaped into the sky
To lash the stars to mad and brilliant dance.
How ran she with swift whirl and pirouette
Through golden bog and marshland red and brown,
O'er dun-dark pasture field, round scarlet hills,
Past vermeil woods that blushed, and softly rich,
Glowed like a ripe rose fallen from the sky!
Coquettish sister of the spring she came,
Fierce in her beauty and her mastery,
Yet not without the solace of a flower,
Or sacred service of a singing bird.

Pure maiden morning, thrilled by wondrous dreams,
That heralded the opening of her eyes,
Cast back the light grey covering from her throat
And so, in pearly beauty, waking lay.
Reclining on purple pillows there,
She drew aside the rosy, russet veil
That screened her couch, and gazed upon the world.
Up leaped the spirit of the adoring earth
To woo her, and with many flowers, dew-filled,
He bathed the night's soft kisses from her eyes,

And in those freshened depths saw rich reward,
At which the heavens burned into the day.

Bright day, the air-born child of morning, mused
And brooded o'er the riches of the earth.
Sprung from hot coursing blood, warm orient hours,
And pulsing with his passionate majesty,
He stretched his rounded, full and glowing form
Along the burnished couch that Autumn laid.
He drew smoke-purpled fire about his head,
And sent the tender footed nymphs of song,
And all the fays that feast upon the wind,
With long and delicate harps and flower-sweet bells,
To wake the quivering shades to harmonies,
Lulling, delicious, soft, like strains that sweep
The silver chords of heaven's golden strand.
He threw into the water's quick embrace
The streaming hearts of lorn and lonely loves,
So that forever on the shore, the waves
Like burdened tears piled up their weight of woe.
And so, in love with life, he played with death,
'Till evening stole upon him where he lay,
And from his mighty heart took gushing life,
Her heavy robes to re-incarnadine.
Then fled she from the fury of her guilt,
Trailing her scarlet sin across the sky
And fainted on the threshold of the night.

Forth came he, sovereign, stately king
And hurled the stars like flames into the sky.
He smote the weary world with heavy dreams,
Yet could not smite to duller consciousness
The sad Musician's heart, as long he sat
Alone, in struggle with the dread of souls,
Inevitable grief, which had not e'en
The keen, tormenting hope that piqued despair
To bloody howling in racked Tantalus' breast.
Before him died a far spent coal and in
Its flimsy ash he read the fate of life,

A thing fit for the licking tongues of winds
And hollow moanings of a sooty flue.
"How coward eternities of heavy death
May coldly sneer at all this panting life,
This perfumed body, dimpled with delight,
Softened by luxuries and honeyed hours!
Ah! Bastard twilight! What is love but loss
In guise chimerical? What joy, but pain
Unborn? What chiliasm but a time
When tethered Satan winks at naked souls?
Grant but a gain, and it is never recked
Except it came of misery or goes
To grief. Yes, darkness ne'er had horror known,
Unless in cosmic spasms it had born
Its first hot child of light. All flowers fade
In measure of their glory; and that soul
Which highest flies, falls farthest; all life's wine
Bears drunkenness to suit its distillation."

With savage and distorting misery,
Abortion's spasm, thus he reasoned on
And longed against the curse that held him thus,
Spitted upon his cruel, forked agony,
Held out o'er fiercely stabbing flames of woe.
His spirit wrestled bitterly with life
And would, like Icarus, have braved the sun,
Had not a whisper breathed within his breast:
"I give, I take; I measure joy and pain
Nor try thee here with either past they strength.
Be comforted and know thy sufferings here
Are fast recorded where they'll yield thee bliss
Unspeakable, if that ye but endure."
So leaned he back to drink the pungent breath
Of burning cedar, and to watch the flames,
The pretty flames at frolic with the shades.
The little, human things that hung like jewels
About his strange, wild heart, took life again
And once again his sorrow fell like wine,
Like spiced and sparkling wine, against his soul,

Like music far away and whispering
Its mortal melancholy in his ear.
A sigh of weakness, pitiful content
Moved in his bosom, faltered through his lips
As he stretched out his hand against the flame
And marked how darkly clear the bone showed through
Its pallid casing of blue-veined flesh.
A deep-dyed mist moved close before his eyes,
And in the mist a figure slowly formed,
Tall, dark, with grace angelic, noble, rare.
Upon her breast, and nestling o'er her heart,
A gallant rose slept like a cupid's kiss,
While smiles like benediction arched her lips
And soulful prayers illumined her large eyes.
He started with a moan and panting fell
Among the cushions of his easy chair.

A tapping of soft knuckles on the door
Aroused him not, nor did the gentle voice
That pleaded for admission, stir his ear.
A face showed ghastly 'gainst the window pane,
The door clicked open and about him fell
The strong arms of his tender, anxious nurse,
Who raised him and upon his pallid face,
Seamed deep with pain, poured down her fresh, hot tears.
Her plaintive chidings slowly freed him from
The tangling meshes of the lethargy,
That closely snared and netted in his sense.
The dismal fretting past, he tried to smile
To re-assure the girl, and bade her sit
To enjoy the comfort of the drift-wood fire.

With eyes upraised to question of his need,
She moved a burning brand among the coals.
The night wind, dreamy, dulcet, surge on surge,
Flowed through the dark and sweetly fluted pines,
Making a melody about the eves,
A murmuring monody and minor weird
Within the dark and rocky chimney's throat.

'Twas such a time as melted hearts pour out
The oldest wine of their experience,
And when young confidences thrill with life,
With eager tremors, yet with careful doubts.

With sentences that oft in murmuring died,
And faltered to a hesitating close,
She spoke: "A driftwood fire is beautiful!
Those coals glow like the winter apple's cheek,
Like the viburnum's leaf or sumac's fan.
How cherrily the little naked flames
Clothe round them dresses of the folding smoke,
And dance unto the music of the wind!
My heart swells like a rose bud in the morn,
When dew and honey kiss its opening lips.
Strange comfort, almost pain, embraces me;
All suffering, they say, is for our good.
See how this flame has hotly forked through that,
How they do burn together, how they part
And sink into the ashes with content.
Love goes not so to death. Love must possess;
A fire within a fire must ever burn,
Or it will never cease to twitch and leap
Like lone, wind smitten flames. Why look you down
With such a yearning pity in your eye?
The sweetest tears that ever man can shed
Are those of sympathetic confidence.
Yet always, when I shed mine near your heart
It drowns its greatness in their little woe.
Oh, pity, pity all my simple grief,
And if it comes, a naked, weeping child
Unto your heavy mantled sorrowings,
Do not despise the saltness of its tears!"

"A tear that's wept for love's the holiest thing
That earth can know, and in its sparkling round
Are all the lights of heaven. Those who weep
Are born again with God, and those baptised
In sorrow know the depth, the height, the breadth

Of life, and all its divine purposes.
Come, fear not, for my soul is quick with grief,
And suffering lends its kindness to my heart.
'Tis only those who never felt love's pain,
Who murder with a glance and trample down
Their cutting feet upon a brother's soul."

The great log broke, a thousand heavy sparks
From its fire-eaten heart, cast their deep glow
Within her eyes, and bathed her upturned face
With colors of the forest-born wild rose.
She nestled closer to him, and with voice
More rich with love than vibrant, shrill and sharp
With the great primal curse of woman's soul,
She spoke: "It all is strange. Your coming here
Was strange. Yet, that you were a lone, sad man
I held it not in heavy question; but
Her coming is beyond my power to explain.
She's lodging there within my lover's home;
She's tall and dark and sweetly beautiful;
To her I'm but the daisy to the rose.
I know not whence she came, nor why she's here,
But, ah! My woman's heart divines the why
And traces in my lover's cooling zeal
The reason of it all. I never thought
That man could trifle so with woman's love."

Piqued by the strangeness of the things he heard,
He would no doubt have reasoned toward the truth,
Had not his mind and heart in sympathy
United in a lotion and a balm
For her distress, and his frail energies
Bended themselves alone for her relief.
The bitter gibes that he himself had hurled
Against the ways of life, he hid away,
And spoke in soothing phrase of recompense:
Sweet, molifying, kind philosophies
Suiting her maiden innocence, wrought out
Of feelings, and fast woven through

With the gold thread of all enduring faith;
So that she ceased to sob and hold her heart,
Bade him good-night that she might walk awhile
And lift her troubles up and set them free.

In his uncertain, feverish, tiring sleep,
The locket that was chained about his neck
Fell like a crushing burden on his breast,
And by its scalding, torturous, and mighty weight
Seemed pressing out the life incased there.
And yet he could not die; and dark, hot flowers
Fell on him out of heaven, and blue lights
Burst in his brain like shells of fiery glass.
Oft leaped he from the canyon's fearful edge,
To save his sweetheart from some savage crew,
And helpless hung upon some jagged point,
'Till all the horried deed before his eyes
In mockery had slowly been performed.
And oft from green-mouthed waves he climbed the sides
Of passing vessels, to be beaten back
By flashing oars and lashes tipped with steel.
On freezing wastes he found the kindly kiss
Of death, and paid his all of misery
To gain her numb embrace, when life with sharp
And fiery hooks, siezed on his quivering form
And dragged him through a thousand fearful hells,
Where devils set upon him in the flames,
And fear weighed down his feet from speedy flight,
As though he ran in quagmires thick with glue.
But ever o'er his heart the locket lay,
With its dear content of a smiling face
And one dark strand of graceful, waving hair.

In the warm splendor of the afternoon
He made his way unto the laughing gold
That marked the singing water's bright confine;
Unto the zone of brilliant, pillowing sands,
Where little waves laid down their heads to sing
And murmur melodies within their sleep.
Upon a blanched and barkless water-log

He weakly rested, while the refreshing sun
Environed him like strong and luscious wine.
Over the beauteous waters swept his gaze;
Over the glorious hills his vision roamed,
And would have strained beyond their flowery marge
Had not the Indian smoke o'er hazed his eyes,
So that with lowered gaze at last he saw
The dull, soaked leaf, its color pigment gone,
Which sobbed against the red sands at his feet.
"Even so am I," he mused, "a wave washed leaf,
Untimely bit by frost and torn by wind,
Fallen with all my splendor in the tide
Which steals my strength and soon will cast me forth
Upon the waste and shadowy wilds of death.
How life is like a fevered, horrid dream!
The filling of a sieve, the rolling of
A stone up one long hill whose crested top
Forever hurls it backward to the plain.
All men have Titan blood, and all earth has
Dank glooms of Tartarus. 'Tis vain to live,
Yet death hath not so much as vanity."

So as he traced the burning threads of life
That snarl within a scheme of mystery,
He fell to idle query as to who
Had robbed his gracious nurse of her one love.
And e'en as thoughts that toy with idle tales
Discover strange and quick realities,
So his thoughts flashed upon a fiery gem
That burned as does the fierce raw radium.
Who might she be who thus so strangely came;
Who might she be, tall, dark, and beautiful;
Who might she be so soon as—Esther!
A weak, wild laugh flowed fiercely from his lips
And hard convulsions gripped him with sharp power,
So that he writhed and cursed his weary brain
That it should conjure such an added woe
To damn him with more grief than he had known.
Upon the sand he kneeled and o'er the log

He flung his quivering frame, with heavy sobs
To waste his waning strength in mighty prayer
For life, just life, and yet for life, for life!
So raising up his face toward the sun,
That swam in swirling radiance through the sky,
He would have given his soul to prayer's bright wings
Had not his sight betrayed unto his sense
A moving object, wandering joyously
Among the flocks of pretty, dimpling waves.
As low he crouched behind his altar's length
He saw a boat of clear, familiar curve,
Thrust through the waters by a sweeping stroke
Such only as one hand the country through
Could give; and in its buoyant stern there sat
A woman, gowned in grey, who trailed her hand
In luscious idleness through emerald waves,
That crooned and laughed beneath her lightsome touch.
The febrile fancy of his transfixed gaze
Siezed each suggestive movement that she made,
And there, before him, Esther sat and smiled.

His simple friend, albeit full of care
And mothering instincts gentle toward his wants,
Found him at eventide, in chilly pace
And heavy hopelessness, and wandering state,
Among the sharp-cut hills that jostling rose
Toward the East of where his cottage lay.
Exposed to their cold-streaming valley's air
He stumbled on, and beat his open breast
As he would render it insensible
To its own moans and woe too deep for moan.
Wild flared his eyes from out the matted hair
That tumbled o'er his brows; and whitely glared
His close fixed teeth between his lips that curled
To ease the spasm that had set within
His face; and all his manner seemed to speak
The last revolt of human misery.
Yet at her voice his clenched hands loosely fell,
His frame relaxed, and melting sobs shook all

The hard rebellion from him, leaving him
A weak and weary child who longed for rest.

So happened on the aureate Autumn days,
Bright periods within a lurid dream,
And as the sinking sun more fierce doth glow,
Doth rend the red heart of the very heavens
In his fate-fixed decline, so now that she
Was near, the sad Musician's love
In the sweet fire of hope sank slowly down
While life cried, "Pity!" 'gainst the steely face
Of an inevitable, mocking doom.
More strongly now the human impulse came,
As sickness weakened his high set resolve,
To make his presence known to her who went
So oft and gladly midst the singing waves,
'Till all the lake sang but a song of her.
But something of his former purposes,
Inspired by noble and unselfish love,
Still ruled his mind. He sealed his secret close
Within his nurse's heart, and through her fixed
The eager lips of those who called her child;
While he himself, in wondering, wide-eyed pain,
Leaned back to watch the action slowly move
From scene to scene, on to its curtained close.

Each day, with more than feeble step,
With many restings, slowly, haltingly,
And yet with eagerness and careful stealth,
He made his way among the high-domed trees,
To a sure hiding place upon the point,
Which like a harp lay bended in the lake.
From this lone vantage 'till the sun were low
He'd watch for her upon the water's breast.
And oft her boat of dainty, shallop grace,
Tracing its favorite course to a green isle,
Flew past him there, or lightly drifted on
Within the calling of his husky voice;
And ever in the stern she sat and trailed

Her lily fingers through the emerald waves.
But now, the rower, not as at the first,
Full many times leaned on his flashing blades,
That dripped their watery dews, and sang some low
Yet lusty melody, or spoke soft words
Whose gentle whisperings swooned upon the breeze.
And now, as not before, her look would raise
To seek the mystery that fairer grew
Within the blue depths that before her glowed.
Too oft reflecting such contagious light
At last her own eyes shone with more than grief.

Strong in the course of nature seems it set
That human hearts shall not be kept from love:
And Esther, deeply cursed and highly blessed,
With an exquisite perfectness of form
And spirit, was for love and loving made.
Deprived against her quick protesting will
Of all the sad Musician's passionate care,
She fed her soul to sickness on the bread
That memory gives, like manna, honey sweet,
But too long kept, becoming rank and sour.
Along the paths they had together trod
She roamed, and in the many nooks
Where they together had retold their trust,
She sobbed her heart out to the heedless stones,
Until at last those same high-rearing hills,
Those hollow canyons voiced with plunging streams,
Those matchless heavens blossoming o'er with stars,
Drove her to desperate flight and wandering.
No choice she had, even as he fled from her
And left her reeling in her wild despair,
So fled she from her native, harboring hills;
And as he roamed to seek sequestered death,
So roamed she ever, ever seeking him.
But hope wore low along the fruitless ways,
And life, long choked by love, asked leave to breathe.
Toward the East he'd pointed when with laugh
Demoniac and frenzied, he had fallen

Before her feet, and for weird fellowship
Within the East she sought a resting place.

In sorrow and in sacred trust she came,
And ever in her heart against her will
His parting admonition sounded on.
If she did battle to maintain her love
For him, she fought against his last request,
So that, perplexed by very zeal for him,
Her tortured soul was forced beyond its bent,
And she, to keep her trust, o'erlooked her love.
By chance, left with a man so sturdy-strong,
Of such a healthy, rich nobility,
Of rustic worth and natural force and power,
From the high fountain of his manliness
Her thirsting soul a new refreshment drew,
And felt strange vigor it had never known,
When from his viril heart at last there leaped
The mighty streams of all-compelling love.

As, day by day, with wilder aching breast
And suffering that ever keener grew,
From his lone watch upon the bended point
The sad Musician marked her pass him by,
It seemed he could no longer mew his soul
From that one cry would bring her back to him.
So near his hiding place she'd lightly float
That she must hear the beating of his heart,
And yet, forever like a phantom thing
She'd draw away, even while her voice would sound
Its low, familiar sweetness in his ear.
At last, one day on which the south wind blew
The sun's rays warmly through the glowing trees,
With many a rustling whisper and sweet sound,
The sad Musician sought his secret haunt,
With breast more fearful-heavy than the night.
For as he struggled on his eyes would lose
Their guiding office, and would turn within
A glaring light that made his brain to seethe.

From tree to tree he groped his dizzy way,
And beat his maddened temples on the bark
To keep his consciousness alive, though fire
Seemed set in every nerve along his frame.
But yet the fury of his weakness cast
No mastery upon his grim set will,
Until he reached his goal and stumbling fell
Among the burning bushes near the log
On which he kept his pensive, patient watch.
The waves surged on against the rocky point,
The mother trees sang lost-leaf lullabys,
While overhead with throaty cough and caw
A squirrel and robber raven held their quarrel.
But all the stir and flash of vivid life
Fell with a numbing beauty, chilly glare
Upon this human heart, fate-cursed, alone.
Outstretched he lay among the fresh, dry leaves
And weakly breathed for life to raise his head
That he might look once more across the lake
And lose no precious glimpse of her loved form,
If but perchance she sailed the waves that day.
As thus he lay, with stiffening shock of pain
There came to him the thought that nevermore
Could he seek out this place to which e'en now
His utmost strength had scarcely carried him;
For with each sun his strength departed so
That even on the morrow he could crawl
But to the oak that marked the three-fourths way.
In heavy judgment so he reasoned
And then approved his reason with a smile
As he stretched forth his lean hand in the sun.
And nevermore he'd see sweet Esther's face—
He struggled toward the log, and panting sat
With burning eyes scanning the wind-curved waves.
As in a dream or a delerium
He saw the boat, and on it came and on,
So lightly on, as though 'twere winged with joy.
Great tears of gladness cooled his red, flushed cheek,
And like a lark within him rose his heart.

He'd call to her, he'd call to her, he'd sing,
He only dreamed that he was ill, he'd rise,
He'd run to meet her on the sounding shore.
All the long past would be but laughter's food,
Yes, laughter would grow fat upon it all!
Joy! Joy! Free, bursting, laughing joy!
Her heart 'gainst his, his violin to sing—
Ah, roses! Roses! Heavens rich with joy!
He started, then sank limply back again;
The boat had turned its course toward the land!
Her heart had told her he was waiting there,
And she was coming, flying nearer—life!
Life! Life! Love! Nevermore pain, woe, and death.
Why searched she not the bushes where he lay?
Why did she gaze so earnestly into
The eyes of him who rowed with quickened stroke?
'Twas but her play, and she would wait and then—
The boat struck hard, the oarsman leaped to land,
And she sprang forth beside him, holding still
The hand he gave her. Would she never come?
Why tarried she so closely by his side,
Her face upraised toward his so radiantly?
The watcher lower crouched, more hotly gazed.
He could not move his sight, nor voice a sound
Of all the screaming agony within
His soul. His ear that formed her greeting glad
Heard but dread silence, then a plighted troth
That in his hollow doom more harshly roared
Than all the cannon of a maddened sea;
And as their lips met in a sacred seal,
All gracious darkness fell upon his mind.

Once more the night, majestical, sublime,
Full of the terror of a million years,
Awful and worshipful, human, God-filled:
A time for murder and a time for birth;
Great hours of paradox, when lonely men
Tremble along the dread ways of the dark,
Yet in the circle of a camp fire's glow

Lie down in dreamy, soft security.
A time of rare abortions for the sense:
When whispers mount the winged winds to heaven
Like strident choruses of shouted sound;
When objects small, inanimate, and still
Move through the vision in a monstrous form;
When water, undiscovered by the eye,
To the deceived palate smacks like wine;
When perfumes, redolent with mixing dews,
Distill themselves with marvelous pungency.
But to the inner senses of the soul,
How goes the night in its suggestive power?
So that a tear let fall within a sigh
Becomes an ocean and a howling wind.
Refulgent with a glory deep and true,
The scintilating stars stood in array,
Sending their long-haired couriers of flame
In burning haste to announce the queen of night.
With serene beauty, heralded by all
The glorious virgins of her chastity,
She paused upon her threshold's burnished marge,
Then slowly, under cloth of shimmering fire,
Passed on unto her high-set, regal throne.
All earth broke forth with royal, deep acclaim
Of startling sweetness. Each soft trembling tree
Became a fountain through which music gushed
And fell upon the air in liquid tone,
Like some piped organ breathing forth its heart.
Low swelling, surging, sweetly billowing waves
Of music, moved the forest with their sound,
As though the tears of God's great singing choirs
Had burst the strong set battlements of heaven
And fallen with all their burden on the earth.
Lo! Now the deep-mouthed water harp was strung
With silvery strings, reverberant, honey-toned,
Which music spirits from the bright clouds touched
Into a quavering threnody of tears.

Unknowing of how he had gained its walls

Within his cottage the Musician sat,
And still he sat and dimly wondered how
His heart could hold so much of hellish pain.
The dull shades of the evening melted in
The glory of the night, and on the wall,
Dark showed the seal case of the violin.
Struggling for strength the pale Musician rose
And tottered toward the mantle where it hung.
Against the wall he leaned with upflung arms,
Then slowly sank upon the knotted floor,
Coughing a prayer for mercy through his sobs.
Yet once again he rose and crawling up
The cold wall's rasping side, he clutched the case
And, reeling, drew it down upon the chair.
Too hot for sobs his burning bosom heaved
As he uncased the violin and grasped
The graceful, arching bow and shook it free.
O'erwhelmed by memories his smothered heart
Sought peace with heaven while his deft hand tuned
The sweet, sad strings to mortal harmony.
Then forth he stepped within the great, deep night;
And as he were approaching God's high throne,
He made his way to the dirge-weighted shore.

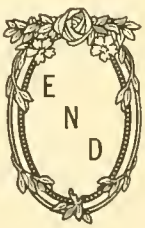
Unmarked by his death-misted eye there came
A golden boat into the silver bay,
A spray-born, lightly moving, joyous thing,
A wave that sailed the waves and wooed them all.
Bright, open casket of heaven's rarest jewel,
Rich, human love, it mounted on its way
Into the glory that around it fell.
And yet, when earthly joy has reached its bound,
It enters in the dark flowered fields of heaven
And finds at last one flower surpassing rare
And sweet and holy, sorrow's black-blown rose.
So Esther found within her heart's deep breast
A memory that mounted to her lips:

"My dear, on this day's night when first our souls

Have plighted deep the sacred pledge of faith,
My heart is yet more heavy than it was
When first it found yours glowing in the sun.
You laughed when I spoke of my former love
And told you it was more than I could feel
For you. In it there was a something fine,
Exalting, delicate, and pure; a trust
Like to the sunrise, ours like to the noon.
He never touched a base or low-born thing,
But lived with spirits of clear purity
Such as could soothe the fearful souls in hell
With a celestial, sympathetic song.
Oh, he was passionate and tuned with fire!
Spirit of music, gallant, bold, and brave,
Majestic in his sure simplicity,
One who could view the mighty vasts of heaven
Through a small opening in a summer's cloud."

Even as she spoke from out the sweetened air
There fell upon her ear with infinite
And solemn woe, his last great threnody,
The music on whose sad and passionate breast
His soul was mounting up and up to heaven.
The opal dews fell fast among the flowers;
The stars wept gently, each to each its woe;
And all the earth grew hushed and softly still
As all the years of all his life had brought
He gave in that sweet moment back to God.
Then in the heavens glowed a charging star,
The herald for the choruses to sing,
And earth took up the wonderous refrain
That first had sung his love to Esther's heart.
Clear rose the music, charged with heavy love,
And sought out Esther where she breathless sat
And called to her eternal, dread farewell.
With voice sharp set, with blanched face toward the land
She whispered "Row!" and fixed her o'erbright eyes
Upon the shore, where tall and shadowy stood
A form that swayed and swayed, and fell!

The music died, a sharp scream cut the heavens
And struck the earth with fear; a woman's soul
Had rent itself, and echoes called it far.
Upon the wet, cold sand she sank and crooned
In his deaf ears, her holiest words of love,
And poured her woman's life out, drop by drop,
To waken but one smile upon his face.
But yet he moved not and in stilly death
He seemed to weep and evermore to weep;
The violin was shattered 'neath his heart,
And broken was the bow within his hand!



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